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Friendship of the Boys.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER;

OR,

THE TWO SCHOOLBOYS.

BY

MARGARET HOWITT.



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BIRDS OF A FEATHER;

OR,

THE TWO SCHOOLBOYS OF SALTMARSH.

CHAPTER I.

CARLOS AND HIS FRIEND.

I KNOW a number of lads at Saltmarsh—Charley Bradford, Ned Crosby, and Robert Farrer, for instance—and you doubtless know others, for it is now quite the rage for “young gentlemen” to go to Saltmarsh.

Of course you have heard that the new wings are already full, and yet at the same time there is a list of names as long as my arm, of boys, big and little, who their parents insist must positively be admitted. And no wonder, for with your knowledge of Saltmarsh, you are aware what “capital good fellows” Gibson and Mr. Lechêne are, and how fortunate is the scholar who is under them. Charley Bradford

told me "that they were regular bricks at cricket after hours, each a whole eleven in himself."

I need hardly tell you that Dr. Winterburn has ceased to take any part in the school ; that he lives at the Warren, which he rents from the former purchaser, and often invites sets of the lads to spend the evening with him, when he allows them to look at the moon through his telescope. Sally Bodermacher, his servant, always makes crumpets when she hears that any of the young gentlemen are coming.

"Poor dear things," she says, "it's right to make much of them, though they don't wipe their boots clean. But old feet are no more matched to young legs than old heads to young shoulders."

Walter, Mr. and Mrs. Hervey's eldest boy, grieves that he is only eight, and longs with the utmost impatience for the time when he shall go to "jolly Saltmarsh."

It will not be a breach of confidence to speak to you about the early days of these excellent schoolmasters, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Lechêne. A little bird told me, and I think I may at least tell you. And whilst detailing to you outward circumstances, you will obtain glimpses into their interior life—into that existence of the soul within which is the spring

of all outward action, and of which we sometimes have a passing insight, just as now and then on a river we obtain a glimpse of the marvellous world lying below its surface.

James Gibson and Carlos Lechêne were with Dr. Winterburn when he had the school. The Doctor was even at that time an elderly man and a widower, whose daughters were married, with the exception of Miss Sybilla. In earlier days, when her father's income was not as sufficient as of late years, it was necessary for Miss Sybilla to look after the boys' clothes, superintend the cooking, and keep the accounts. Habit in her case had become second nature; thus, when her father mildly expostulated with her on her unceasing toil, she would reply that she was miserable if she were idle, and she maintained her ground, doing all in her power to make him and his pupils comfortable. No one called her Miss Winterburn, she was a younger daughter and still chose to retain her Christian name.

Lawyers, doctors, gentlemen farmers of that and adjacent counties sent their sons to Saltmarsh; they knew that the boys made progress and that the place was healthy. "As for scenery, why, lads," they said, "were not sent to school for the enjoyment of fine views.

Spite of people crying it down, there was, as you are aware, much that was curious about Saltmarsh. Certainly it was but a long, sea-girt promontory of innumerable sand-hills, covered with dry, wiry turf, where rabbits burrowed and feathery tamarisk grew ; while in the one oasis of the desert, a sheltered nook facing the south, stood the commodious house inhabited by Dr. Winterburn—the Rectory it could not be called, for there was no regular residence for the rector.

Yet, desolate as the scenery might be considered, in former days a famous abbey, with fat lands and great revenues, made the headland renowned ; this, at the dissolution of religious houses, Henry VIII. gave—a splendid prize—to a wealthy nobleman who had helped him in one of his courtships. Later on, the sea, like an avaricious tyrant, seized upon Saltmarsh, and sweeping away buildings, orchards, and meadows, left in their stead frightful quicksands, the terror of mariners. To such Saltmarsh church served as a beacon ; for, as if by a spirit of prophecy, it had been built upon a rock, and, proof against sea-encroachments, rose above sand and water like a small Mount St. Michael. In very high tides the waves urrounded it, and when this happened on a Sunday,

service was held in the Doctor's schoolroom, which fortunately stood near at hand. The churchyard, too, had been wisely placed upon an elevation on the mainland, which sloping coastward, was guarded by a strong sea-wall; there rested the remains of many a poor shipwrecked mariner, whose vessel, in spite of the church, had been lost on the treacherous shore. At very low tides in March and September; fragments of walls, even roofs, were at times revealed in the sands.

James Gibson's parents lived just beyond the parish boundary at the Warren, a house which had belonged to the family for many years. It stood high, and turning its back on Saltmarsh, faced a rich plain of dairy-farms, with the slender spire of the market-town of Bronsborough cutting across the distant horizon. Mr. Gibson perhaps chose his profession from his locality; he was a cheese-factor and had two children. Reynold, who was grown up, had been educated in London, and at the time of which we are speaking was still there in the office of a South American merchant; and our friend James, ten years younger, who was to go to Dr. Winterburn's when old enough.

Carlos Lechêne was the Doctor's *protégé*, and such he had become in rather a remarkable manner;

to explain this, however, I must speak of his first arrival at school. One dreary January afternoon, shortly after the re-assembling of the school for the first quarter, a lumbering old fly was seen through the side window of the schoolroom to drive up to the house door; the next moment a tall foreigner, with a great black beard streaked with grey, alighted and helped out a little fellow clad in a dark blue flannel suit, whilst the driver dragged down a sea-chest from the coach-box. These facts were afterwards given to the school in detail by such privileged mortals as sate near the above-mentioned side window, and when immediately afterwards the Doctor was called away from the Natural Philosophy class, with which he was then engaged, the whole school would have rushed with a hubbub to the window to witness what was going forward, had not the usher uttered a few stern words, which yet, nevertheless, restored order. Endless were the stealthy glances cast through the window, whereby it was ascertained that the burly driver, having thrown a cloth over his horse and hung the nose-bag to its head, paced to and fro before the house, swinging his arms and blowing his fingers, for it was bitterly cold. In half'an hour the tall dark man,

wrapping his great cloak round him, was seen to enter the lumbering old fly and drive away. The Doctor, too, returned to the duties of the school-room; in the first place, however, despatching small Harry Green to entertain the new comer. Harry strutted away to the parlour, proud of the commission which would make him first acquainted with the new boy, delighted at the half holiday, and the prospect of Miss Sybilla's plum-cake.

That night the little stranger knelt amongst the boys at prayer, and the next day had a place assigned him in the schoolroom. When lessons were over, that first morning, the boys surrounded Carlos, for such was his name, as you know, that they might pump him. They asked him, "where he got his olive skin from, and whether it was his mother's jet black hair which grew on his head?" with scores of similar questions. By degrees he communicated in the best English he could muster, that he came from Rio, that his father was French, and his mother Portuguese, but they were both dead; therefore, that M. Neuville, his guardian, had brought him to England. As for his blue suit, it was made like that which he wore on ship-board; his guardian thinking it admirable for school wear.

These garments gained for Carlos the nicknames of "John Chinaman" and "Indigo," but the last was the most popular.

Before the end of a week little Indigo became a prodigious favourite ; he was rich and generous, and soon spent quite a fortune on the tart woman who visited the school every Saturday afternoon. He treated all the boys, and, better still, paid their debts to this woman, who was often their creditor. He became, indeed, the universal bank ; so if any one was short of cash he had but to draw on Carlos. Before long it was currently known, owing to a seal which his guardian had given to Carlos, that this gentleman was a merchant, a dealer in topazes, amethysts, and other precious stones ; which fact conveyed such an idea of wealth to the school community, that Carlos was regarded as much richer than Ponsonby, a senior boy, the only son of the Lord of the Manor, whilst, at the same time, he was infinitely more open-handed. Carlos was likewise pronounced a boy of spirit, for his southern blood readily boiled up within him, and he was seized with a paroxysm of rage whenever Tanner the bully opposed him. After these outbursts he was always languid and depressed, like the tornadoes

of his native climate, which, though succeeded by a lull, leave traces of desolation behind them. The boys, to divert him, would on such occasions place him in the snuggest corner by the stove, and draw him out in conversation concerning his beautiful home, built of granite on the opposite shores to Rio, and the carriage drawn by four mules, in which he was driven out with his mother, subjects which were as interesting to them as the "Arabian Nights," and the recollection of which produced an almost magically soothing effect on him.

Half a year had passed on in this glorious fashion, when a turn came in the tide of poor Indigo's affairs. In the third quarter, instead of the handsome remittance which had been customary, he received from M. Neuville but one sovereign. Therefore, sad to relate, he grew in small request, and became even less so when, after the holidays, he was discovered still at school, from whence he had never been absent during the vacation, "hard up," and unable to liquidate even the small debts he had previously incurred owing to his decreasing means. He was depressed and unhappy; M. Neuville had neither been to see him, written to him, nor sent him any money. Under these gloomy circum-

stances the school reassembled, and dire necessity compelled Carlos, within the second week, to resign his much-admired seal to Tanner, his principal creditor.

Months passed on without any tidings from M. Neuville, the footstep of his ward grew heavier, a sad weight lay at his heart. His schoolfellows, though the gloss was quite worn off Carlos, and his stories considered stale, were, in the main, sorry for Carlos. Whispers, in the meantime, floated from desk to desk as to what the Doctor would do with him, for it had oozed out in some mysterious manner, though their master himself had never mentioned the subject, that M. Neuville had been no more punctual in making his payment to him than to the boy.

It was just at this time, as if to compensate Carlos for his sorrow, that James Gibson came as a day scholar. A liking for each other had already sprung up between the two, for James was no stranger to the boys, he had long been their companion at swimming, peg-in-the-ring, or snow-balling, besides attending the same church ; the Gibsons and the school, be it said, composing the Saltmarsh congregation.

By degrees such an intimacy sprung up between Gibson and Carlos, that they became inseparable ;

they walked together, learnt their lessons out of the same books, and had adjoining desks. This attachment did not at first strike their comrades as remarkable, for amongst them school friendships were numberless. Each boy had usually his intimate friend to whom, as a proof of great confidence, he told the name of his sister, and with whom he walked up and down amongst the sand-hills, instead of playing with the rest. But these attachments were of short duration, ending in a formal return of each other's letters, and any presents which might have been exchanged between them; although I must confess that a boy now and then retained the latter if valuable, but in that case he was always considered "a mean sneak." On one or two important occasions, amongst the leaders in the school, duels, "unknown" to Dr. Winterburn, came off at the sand-hills; canes being privately purchased, as weapons, in Bronsborough, and which left, to their mode of thinking, many honourable marks behind them on the legs of the antagonists. The termination of a friendship intensely interested all the other boys, who, no longer excluded from sympathizing, were required, one or another, as messengers between the two offended parties, or in a

number, as counsellors to decide, with due decorum, the more intricate misunderstandings.

It was a matter, therefore, of no small surprise that, as time went on, no disagreement between James and Carlos required the mediation of their fellows, who, growing weary of the constancy of this modern Damon and Pythias, or perhaps shamed by such an example of steadfastness, in contempt pinned their sleeves together, or taking a different course, locked them into separate apartments. But practical jokes were unavailing, James and Carlos were true to each other through thick and thin, and wearied out their tormentors. Their master also at first thought of discouraging this close attachment, but perceiving their unvarying diligence he never interfered.

Lechêne now spent his Sundays at the Warren, for Mrs. Gibson fostered the friendship, her motherly heart warming to the orphan. Her son had been a twin, and she used to say, "It is very nice for James to have some one to love; after his little brother died I always laid a flannel baby by his side, for he could not rest without his companion."

I must now relate to you the delightful piece of intelligence which James communicated to his friend

one September day as they sate in the box-room, hearing each other the congenial declension, "Comes, comes, comitem,"—namely, that on that very afternoon his father and mother would drive over in the gig to settle with Dr. Winterburn for him to become a weekly boarder.

"Winter" was coming on, and his mother did not like the thought of his walk home in the dark during the short days. "It was no joke, he must confess," he said, "having to encounter rain and hail in the six miles' daily walk, worse still the stinging east wind, which flung clouds of sand from the sand-hills into your face!" Not but what he would have encountered it all rather than not go to school. Last evening, however, the sea was so strong and rough that he could not use their ferry boat across the little cove, but was obliged to go round by the high road. This had made his mother very uneasy, he found her some distance from home by the Scotch Firs—Carlos knew the place—looking out for him. Whereupon she declared, what she afterwards repeated to his father, that she would fall in with Reynold's advice, and allow James to become a weekly boarder at the school.

"Reynold," remarked James, in conclusion,

"though he lives in London is very fond of giving his advice to the folks at home, and this time, for a wonder, it's worth taking."

"Nothing could be jollier than for James to spend five nights in the week at Saltmarsh," Carlos declared. He thought that if his friend were a resident in the school he himself should be the happiest lad there.

Carlos, poor fellow, had secret griefs, which he had never revealed to any one. Many years of his boyish life had been very unhappy, for M. Neuville had not only neglected him, but treated him cruelly ; and now the fear of Dr. Winterburn becoming the victim of a bad man, and himself being thrown friendless on the world, weighed down his young heart. These were his own private sorrows and anxieties, which as yet no one shared ; but even they seemed to lessen in the bright prospect of his friend's constant companionship.

In the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Gibson drove over, as James had foretold, and made their proposition to Dr. Winterburn and Miss Sybilla.

But now occurred an unexpected difficulty. Both she and her father, to the great disappointment of their visitors, considered their house as full. They

might that quarter, they declared, have had several additional pupils, if the house would have contained them.

Still Dr. Winterburn and his daughter exchanged glances, as if hoping the other possessed some secret means to overcome the difficulty, for both liked James, and would have received him if they could, independently of being wishful to oblige his parents.

Mrs. Gibson sat patiently by, earnestly trusting that the plan might be compassed, whilst her husband, restlessly moving about the room, reminded Dr. Winterburn that "when they were youngsters, lads were packed like herrings in a barrel, yet had thriven; he, for his part, could not understand why an extra bed should not be put up in one of the dormitories." These words produced no effect.

Mr. and Mrs. Gibson stayed tea, and the subject was discussed on all sides.

Whilst they were still at table Miss Sybilla exclaimed in a glad voice,

"Ah! now I see how it can be managed."

"Of course, trust a lady to manage what she pleases," rejoined Mr. Gibson, helping himself plentifully to stewed pears.

"What do you propose?" demanded her father.

"To take the flower stage out of the little lumber room ; I only want it for my flowers in the depth of winter ; we can put up a bed there. It is a little room opening out of my father's," she remarked, turning to their guests, "which we have partly used for lumber."

"I would not have James to intrude upon Dr. Winterburn," interposed Mrs. Gibson.

"Carlos Lechêne can sleep there," said Dr. Winterburn, "until Tanner leaves ; or supposing he do not leave, Mr. Hervey must allow Lechêne to sleep in his room, during the depth of winter. Yes, Sybilla, you have certainly hit upon the right plan."

Mrs. Gibson afterwards inquired if Mr. Hervey were the new usher.

The Winterburns replied in the affirmative, the Doctor adding that he was a most excellent young man, an early pupil of his, who had been at Cambridge with Dr. Winterburn's son-in-law, Mr. Baxter, at whose house he was now staying.

Herewith ensued a lively conversation, from Miss Sybilla calling upon Mr. and Mrs. Gibson to assist her in persuading her father to give himself two days' holiday by going over the following week to Becclesford, and bringing back not only Mr. Hervey, but the whole Baxter family on a visit.

Dr. Winterburn continued, at first, resolute to remain at home. He did not see how Miss Sybilla could manage alone, as the present usher would have then left. He might certainly, he acknowledged, leave the boys lessons to learn, still he should like them to feel that he was represented. The ladies declared that the boys were sure to behave well; Mrs. Gibson said she would spend the night there, and help Miss Sybilla in her various preparations for her relatives' visit; and the boys out of gallantry to them would be tractable.

Mr. Gibson, who asserted it as his opinion, that lads were wild colts, who tugged too hard at the reins for women's hands, suggested that his son Reynold, who would be with them the following week, and who was clever and steady enough for anything, should also sleep at Saltmarsh the night that Dr. Winterburn was away. This proposal seemed to meet with general approbation.

Matters thus arranged to every one's satisfaction, the good Doctor started off upon his little trip on the Friday morning, as brisk as a bee, leaving behind him many exhortations concerning the boys.

I have said that all were satisfied. There were some, however, who were not so: Reynold, for

instance. Indeed, when he heard, on his arrival, of his going to Saltmarsh, he grew very angry ; not approving, as he said, of plans being made for him without his sanction. He protested that " he hated boys, and came to stay at home, not to be sent from pillar to post." James and Carlos too were disappointed, for they had hoped to share the same apartment ; the latter confided to his friend how frightened he should be to pass through Dr. Winterburn's room morning and evening.

But it is always difficult to please everybody. Let us, however, proceed. Carlos, early in the week, was inducted into his new room, which Miss Sybilla had transformed into a snug little nest. When you go to Saltmarsh, you will find it at present a bath-room. In those days the internal arrangements were on a much less extensive scale. The large schoolroom, as the last generation of scholars will remember, had once been the stables and coach-house, with windows looking on to the playground, formerly the stable-yard, which lay between the house and those outbuildings. The old harness-room was the box-room, where the boys kept their lockers, bats, and balls. On the floor above, two large airy chambers had been constructed, which were reached by a long passage,

and these were occupied by Dr. Winterburn and Miss Sybilla. Carlos's room, as we know, was an adjunct to that of the former. It looked across a paved walk and the meadow towards the sea.

On that particular Friday, Carlos was suffering from influenza, and Miss Sybilla sent him early to bed, on which she ordered extra blankets, and made him a great basin of wine whey, which Mrs. Gibson took up to him, attended by James. Mrs. Gibson wrapped him in a shawl whilst he took the wine whey in bed, nor would she let her son remain behind talking with him, because she wished Carlos to become warm and go to sleep. She meant to take the school a long walk the next day, and it would be a disappointment, she said, to leave him behind.

It was now night, yet Reynold had not made his appearance, and his mother, who was naturally of an obliging disposition, and who, having so great a regard for Dr. Winterburn and his daughter, would be the last in the world to show them any slight, said nothing of her son's unwillingness to become the Doctor's representative, nor yet of her fear lest her son, whose selfish obstinacy she well knew, might not come. None of the boys, not even his brother, knew that he was expected, so that his absence was

not noticeable to them. Miss Sybilla, who had been looking for him all the afternoon, said nothing, however.

In the meantime, Carlos, after thinking what kind people were the Gibsons, and wishing that M. Neuville would send the money to pay Dr. Winterburn, and enable him to redeem his seal, fell into a sound refreshing sleep. From this he was partially roused by what appeared to him, in his drowsy state, to be the Doctor walking across his room, although, becoming fully awake, he remembered that he was not at home, that the only persons in the building were himself, Mrs. Gibson, and Miss Sybilla, who slept together. Instantly his heart was thumping like a steam-engine, and the object of Mrs. Gibson's wine whey was accomplished—he was in a tremendous perspiration. Next he heard a rustling amongst the branches of the neighbouring tree, and then footsteps on the paved path below. Had thieves actually been in the house, and were now going off with their booty?

He believed so, and earnestly trusting that Mrs. Gibson and Sybilla were safe, he listened again with all his senses. It was all very dreadful to be thus aroused in the dead of the night, and worse still, for

he again heard a footstep below. Convinced of the reality of the danger, but forgetting himself, he leaped out of bed. Had Dr. Winterburn been at home he would instantly have given the alarm ; but knowing that he was from home, he stood, all in a tremble, listening. Again he heard steps outside, and he now felt confident that the sounds which he had heard when partially awake were outside, instead of in the adjoining room.

“ Where is the good of waking women ? ” thought he, as, with a degree of strength which made him a marvel to himself, he opened the window purposely with a loud sound, and again, for the third time, heard a fainter tread, as if the intruders, cautioned by the noise above, were now stealing away.

It was too dark to see anything, for the moon, in one of her quarters, was hidden in clouds. Believing that the thieves, though invisible, were lurking near, he called out,—

“ You scamps, whoever you are, had better be off ! We’ve a big bell here, which will ring up the school in a jiffy.”

These proceedings had been amazingly rapid. He waited at the open window for the result of his menace, but no further sounds were audible. Still,

as he had not heard his "scamps" depart, he drew a blanket off the bed, which adjoined the window, and wrapping it round him, remained as watchman for twenty minutes or more, which to him seemed an eternity.

He wondered if, by any chance, the men were trying the other house, and he resolved, as soon as he could safely leave his post, to satisfy himself that the Doctor's room had not been entered, but just as he recollected that, from going to bed so early, he was unprovided with a candle, all his senses again became aware of renewed gentle footsteps.

"Now, now they're coming," thought he.

He almost ceased to breathe, listened—listened—then discovered what a simpleton he had been.

Heavy rain drops falling slowly on the ivy leaves outside were his imagined gentle footsteps !

After waiting until a few minutes had completely confirmed the fact, he closed the window, and greatly relieved, jumped into bed again, congratulating himself by the knowledge that, even supposing such an exciting event as thieves should occur, small boy as he was, he had courage enough to encounter them.

The next morning Carlos rose ; but his cold was

found to be so severe that Miss Sybilla speedily sent him back to bed, allowing James to visit him in his imprisonment, to whom he confided the stirring occurrences of the previous night, over which they had a hearty laugh. The boys, discussing the affair, came to the rational conclusion that the footsteps which had caused Carlos to wake were after all within and not without; neither were they imaginary, but those of Reynold, who had arrived late last night, and was then no doubt retiring to rest. Whilst they were talking over this interesting subject, and trying to account for the noise in the tree, Reynold entered, and on its being mentioned to him he became, to their surprise, suddenly angry, desired he might never hear another word on the subject, and ended by treating the conduct of Carlos as that of a very foolish, terrified baby, instead of a proof of true courage, as it really was.

Each boy, with a feeling of indignation, supposed that Reynold wished to personate the Doctor, in this disagreeable authoritative style, and thoroughly sick of the subject, by a tacit understanding the matter was not spoken of again, either by themselves or to others. Nevertheless there was reason, as we shall hereafter see, in the alarm of Carlos.

Lechêne's affairs seemed just at this time to be strangely uppermost. Curiously enough, that same evening, when Dr. Winterburn arrived with Mr. Hervey, his daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren, he asked, even before he inquired about the boys' behaviour, whether M. Neuville had not been there.

Of course Miss Sybilla, Mrs. Gibson and Reynold, who were still of the party, were quite startled, and asked what made him fancy so.

To this he replied, that whilst at the Becclesford Junction he had seen on the opposite platform, waiting for the up train, a person whose face was quite familiar to him, but he could not recall who it belonged to, until nearing home he had remembered that it was that of M. Neuville. He had only seen him once, and then he wore a beard. He was amazed if he happened to be mistaken, for in a court of justice, the Doctor said, he should have sworn to its being he.

Every one felt quite excited at the mere belief of Neuville having been in the neighbourhood ; but it was doubly mysterious and suspicious if he had been skulking about. After tea, therefore, Reynold was gladly allowed to return to Bronsborough, in the fly which had been purposely retained, to in-

quire what strangers had been in the town. He brought back word that neither at the railway-station, at any of the inns, nor yet at the post-office, could he gain any information regarding any person who answered to his description.

Reynold had taken up the matter very warmly; nor did his ardour cool. He drove over on the Sunday afternoon, which was the next day, in the gig to Lowcote, a village on the line below Bronsborough, to endeavour there to gain some tidings. It was a scandalous affair, he protested, to leave a pupil so long without payment, and he could not feel easy without doing his part to discover the wretch. He drove, on his return, direct to Saltmarsh, and reported to Dr. Winterburn, who was both gratified and surprised by his zeal, that the only stranger he could hear of at Lowcote, was a friend of Mr. Ponsonby's, who had been partridge-shooting on his lands, and had partaken of luncheon at the "Wherry Inn." But he could not be the delinquent.

On the Tuesday Reynold returned to London, where he promised to make strict inquiries after Neuville from an agent, whom it was known he had in that city, and to communicate the results to Dr.

Winterburn. Before long he wrote that his inquiries had been in vain ; that the agent had heard nothing of Neuville for many months, and the supposition must therefore be that he was not in the country.

After the Christmas holidays, which Carlos spent at the Warren, a letter came from Neuville himself, clearing up the enigma. It was written from North America, where he stated himself to have been for some time. Dr. Winterburn could hardly believe his eyes as he read this document, in which the writer coolly declared that for the future he must resign Carlos to his tender mercy ; he was himself penniless ; and now that the money left by his father for the boy's maintenance was exhausted, he should no longer hold himself responsible. He carefully omitted to insert his exact whereabouts, so that no remonstrance could be used.

It was some days before Dr. Winterburn trusted himself to break the painful intelligence of his desertion to the cast-away. He did it as gently as possible, but the poor child (for he was but eleven) received it with one of his paroxysms of rage and emotion, which, since his growing intimacy with James, were becoming of ever rarer occurrence. Realizing his lonely fate, he covered his face with

his hands, and shook with convulsive sobs. The Doctor, who had a kind heart under a somewhat stern exterior—at least, stern when the boys were unruly,—drew the sufferer towards him, and reassured him by the promise that until M. Neuville returned (for he hardly took the man at his word) he should have a home there.

“Then I will work for you, sir!” exclaimed Carlos, looking up with renewed hope and joy.

“At what, Carlos?” asked his teacher, with an incredulous smile, for what could such a little fellow do?

“Make the dormitory beds, lay the cloth, help Miss Sybilla now, and study so as to help you, sir, when I’m a man.”

“Bravely said,” replied his listener. “You can never want a friend whilst you are thus willing to do your duty. For the present I am your guardian, Carlos.”

“In that case, sir,” returned the new *protégé*, hesitating at first, then boldly proceeding, “you will oblige *mé* with the loan of fifteen shillings.”

At such an abrupt request, Dr. Winterburn looked staggered, and demanded into what scrape he had fallen, in the very tone which made the boys quake in their shoes.

“It is to pay a few debts I made whilst expecting M. Neuville, and which I want to discharge. I shall let you have it back, sir, in running errands, working in the garden, or doing anything.”

“You need not do that,” said the Doctor, producing a small canvas bag out of his desk, in which he kept his gold. “Here is a sovereign. The five shillings over are for yourself. Once for all, look upon me as a father.”

You can imagine Carlos’s gratitude, especially as he should now be able to recover his seal.

The boy’s frankness and confidence greatly delighted his preceptor ; his pity waxed strong, and in the moment of first emotion, he felt as if he could not do too much for his poor bereaved little pupil. Later, however, he began to doubt whether he had not been too lavish in his promises.

Do not think harshly of Dr. Winterburn ; he was not—who upon this earth is ?—quite perfect.

When tea was over, a meal which father and daughter took alone, he drew his armchair towards Miss Sybilla’s work-table, and began, rather anxious as to how she would receive the intelligence, in the following manner :—

“I broke the news as best I could to Carlos ;

nevertheless, the poor little fellow was dreadfully cut up. I hardly anticipated such a scene."

"No wonder the boy felt it! Could I but reach that heartless man!" burst forth Miss Sybilla, in great indignation, and breaking her thread in her vehemence, "I would let the law do its worst to him; I would not spare him. I should like to know, indeed, what he imagines is to become of the child?"

These words did not lighten Dr. Winterburn's task, yet he continued:—

"The boy's fate would be most perplexing, if, my dear, in a moment of weakness, I had not promised to be a father to him."

"You are a parent to all your scholars," returned his daughter, laying her palm softly on Dr. Winterburn's hand.

"But I have pledged myself to be so, specially, in this case. You may look surprised, Sybilla. I grant it was rash. During the conversation, two feelings contended within me: one urging me to afford to Carlos my utmost protection; the other prompting me first to soberly consider the step. The lad's sorrow made me yield to the earliest impulse. Thus have I brought down upon myself the heavy responsibility

of providing for a human being who has not the slightest claim upon me. Sybilla, Sybilla, how could I have been so weak !” exclaimed Dr. Winterburn, becoming a prey to his misgivings.

“I will speak to Carlos. The boy is honourable ; he will not have you fettered by a rash promise,” was the reply.

“Not for the world, dear ! He is a good lad ; he offered to work, and do what he could.”

“That is as it ought to be. Still, I think, father, that you were ensnared.”

This conversation afforded satisfaction neither to one nor the other. They were annoyed both at the cause and at themselves. Indeed, it was a day or two before they could look the matter boldly in the face. They then wisely resolved to fulfil the duty nobly which Dr. Winterburn had unwarily taken upon himself.

Carlos, quite unconscious that the Doctor had repented in the slightest degree of his promise, went willingly about the different duties set him, at his own request, by Miss Sybilla. He tried as much as possible to screen M. Neuville’s conduct, but his companions gradually discovered the baseness of this unprincipled man, and vowed to burn him in effigy.

This, however, by James's interference, they never did, perhaps from respect to Carlos, who made every one admire the cheerfulness with which he performed his humble duties.

Although Dr. Winterburn and his daughter now and then murmured a little at the burden laid upon them, still, through the Divine blessing, and Carlos's own usefulness, the small flame of discontent gradually died out. Genuine love took its place in their hearts, and they even grew thankful to have been of service to the betrayed and friendless boy. Would that we could each one befriend some poor solitary outcast, and open our homes and hearts to him, like Dr. Winterburn and Miss Sybilla! Pray God we may!

CHAPTER II.

THE CONFIRMATION.

WE now pass on to the spring of the year when James and Carlos were both fifteen, during which season there appeared little chance of the school seeing the walls of the ruins sometimes visible in the sands in some of the neap tides of March and September, for the former had come in like a lion, with terrific gales and heavy rains, regular hurricanes, clearing the promontory of its usual frequenters—boys, seagulls, and rabbits.

Fortunately, however, just at the right time, the weather changed, and most opportunely on a Wednesday half-holiday, so in spite of a biting east wind—for what did that matter to a set of joyous lads in rude health and spirits—the noisy crew rushed forth to see what havoc the storms had made. They found that these had not been idle. There was a perfect transformation at the boundary of the sand-hills, the features of the place were completely changed, old hillocks were swept away, and fresh

ones had risen. On the shore gigantic ramparts of shingle had been erected, whilst the sands were scooped out into hundreds of hills and hollows by the surging waters. James Gibson, born and bred there, had no remembrance of like distortions; which was not to be wondered at, as there had not been such changes since the year 1800, memorable by the number of gigantic human bones, coins, and curious metal dishes which had been then disinterred by the waves.

The boys tore hither and thither on the shingle, being forbidden the sand-hills, which were dangerous, till tired of the novelties which had at first attracted them—such strange, capricious animals are lads!—away they scampered, singing and shouting, to the churchyard for a vaulting-match!

James and Carlos preferred remaining behind, being attracted by a monster excavation in the sand which to their fancy seemed to resemble the Devil's Punch Bowl at the Giant's Causeway, as they had both heard it described by Mrs. Gibson, who was of Irish birth, and loved to talk about her native land. And here it may not be amiss to mention that a very beautiful castle in the air had sprung up out of Mrs. Gibson's love for Ireland, in which

the youths took equal pleasure. This was no other than that James and his dear friend Carlos, from whom he had vowed that nothing but death should part him, should accompany her on a visit to her relatives, the Blayneys of Kinean. This imaginary Devil's Punch Bowl in the sand was therefore a very fitting place to talk over again the delightful scheme, which had so often been talked over before, and to trace out on the little pocket-map of Ireland which James had carried for months in his pocket, the road to Kinean, which was indicated by a fine mark with a pen, it being a small estate or "demesne" near the little manufacturing town of Connbaccagh, and which belonged to the present representative of the old family, Mr. Ambrose Blayney, manufacturer, of Connbaccagh.

No wonder was it, therefore, that they declined to follow the rest to the churchyard. The Irish scheme absorbed all their interests and faculties, it now being determined between them that if they could not accomplish it as boys it should be their first joint-pleasure as men.

In the midst of these plans for the future James perceived something pass behind a distant wall of sand. "A smuggler! a smuggler!" he shouted, for fun.

"A cow!" said Carlos.

"A cow in a coat! That would be a joke. I'll ferret it out!"

With these words James ran up a little ridge, and then joyously called out, "It is my father!"

Carlos followed James, and the two soon overtook Mr. Gibson, who was walking slowly, and as if heavily, with his hands in the pockets of his large overcoat. He was a good-tempered man in general, but to-day he seemed angry, and as if displeased to see them. James, supposing that his father imagined them to be out of school bounds at an undue hour, reminded him that it was half-holiday, and then himself inquired what had brought him there, and where he had been, for his boots and trousers were wet as if by wading in water.

"I have been after a sheep of your master's," was his reply, for all the animals were under Mr. Gibson's especial charge; "a sheep which has strayed on the sands."

"And have you not been able to find it?" inquired James.

"Yes, *find* it; but it was beyond my reach; saving it was out of the question, for the tide is fast coming in."

“Cannot we fetch the boys, and help you sir, before it is too late?” asked Carlos; “they are in the churchyard, and could be here in a minute. We could get even now to the outlying sands safely enough.”

“And have you all swamped in the quicksands!” retorted Mr. Gibson, almost fiercely. “Now be off with you.”

There was something strangely amiss with his father, James thought. He was not usually so much disconcerted even by the loss of several sheep; and with a mixed feeling of wonder and annoyance he drew Carlos away, and the two slowly proceeded towards the churchyard, speaking no more that day of the Irish castle in the air.

James could not forget the singular behaviour of his father; nevertheless a new subject of absorbing interest, which was the next day introduced to the whole school, gave a new turn to his thoughts. The Bishop had acceded to a request of Dr. Winterburn's, and would come after Easter to confirm the elder boys. This created great excitement, for Carlos and several other boys had never even seen a bishop. Dr. Winterburn announced that instead of the chemistry lectures which he had hitherto delivered

twice a week, he should hold preparation classes, and James was commissioned to inquire from his parents the following Saturday if he should join them.

On Saturday James found his father had gone to London; his mother, however, answered both for herself and his father, that he was to become a candidate.

There was no difficulty with respect to Carlos. Before his arrival in England he had been brought up in no particular faith, and now since his desertion he had voluntarily accepted the belief of those around him.

Carlos accompanied James home on this particular occasion, and the latter soon made inquiries from his mother respecting the lost sheep. But the subject was evidently strange to her, and when more fully explained with reference to his father it was equally apparent that she evaded any direct reply. Nevertheless, James renewed the subject on their return from church, but she again gave no direct reply, requesting James to open her umbrella, for it had begun to rain, and bidding Carlos button up his jacket and run home to the Warren, lest he should get wet.

Mother and son being now alone, she astonished him by the half-distressed tone in which she spoke, saying that she was about to place great confidence in him ; that what she had to communicate must not be repeated to his companion.

James, alarmed by her manner, promised strict obedience.

“Do not ask about the sheep,” she said, with a countenance of pale emotion ; “there may be one lost. I cannot say, for sheep are often lost, you know, by the tide ; but that was not the object which took your father to the sands. For, by some means, he has come upon a hoard of old treasure in a niche of masonry laid bare by the sea.”

“But that’s jolly good news, is it not ?” asked James, all excitement. “What sort of treasures ?”

“I have not seen them,” she replied, “but I believe there are some heavy gold chains, and a silver box set with jewels.”

“But are they ours ?” inquired James.

“That is the question,” returned his mother. “I for my part cannot tell. Your father has no doubt about it. But they must never be mentioned. He is gone up to London about them, and to consult with Reynold.”

"But why are you crying, mother?" asked James, seeing this to be the case.

"I don't feel well, dear, and some way this affair has upset me. If this treasure is not rightly ours it will bring misery."

James could not share his mother's anxiety, for he thought his father good authority; besides, if they were rich perhaps Carlos might live with them, and he wished of all things to be a benefactor to his friend. His mother earnestly besought of him to pray that his father might be guided to do only that which was right, and he promised her, only begging on his part that she would not distress herself.

Mr. Gibson was not at church, either on Good Friday nor yet on Easter Day, because he had again left for London. He went on the Wednesday, and had travelled the first fifty miles in the same carriage with Ponsonby and two or three other youths who were fortunate enough to go home for Easter. The boys were annoyed when he entered their compartment. They had as usual been looking forward to the journey as "a capital lark;" Ponsonby had paid the difference for Ray, who was a poor clergy-

man's son, and despised in the school for wearing only a "four-and-ninepenny gossamer," whilst the others had "first-rate beavers," in order that he might travel first-class with them; they had agreed by hook or by crook to keep the carriage to themselves, and supply themselves with newspapers and plenty of "tuck-in" at the different stations where the train stopped. Now, Mr. Gibson poking himself in, would, they considered, spoil sport, so they all looked tremendously glum. However, he began joking with them, and being in capital spirits, told them such droll, funny stories, that they were ready to split their sides with laughter. They were quite sorry when Becclesford Junction was reached, where Mr. Gibson must change trains, and when he was gone unanimously pronounced him "an old trump," especially as on alighting he had tipped them each with half-a-crown.

We now must speak of the confirmation. It was to be on the Tuesday, and on the previous Friday, the members of Dr. Winterburn's household began to be as busy as ants, though for once the regular lessons were suspended.

To begin with Dr. Winterburn. He had a great deal on his hands, he had much business to transact

with his clerical brethren, for not only were sixteen of his boys candidates, but a number of the young people of Bronsborough, some of the parish children, and a quantity of Mrs. Waltham's pupils.

Next, Miss Sybilla. She commenced making preparations for the luncheon, to which those who were to be confirmed and their friends had been invited by Dr. Winterburn. She did not stir from the kitchen, from whence savoury odours began already to issue, but clad in a great white apron, weighed sugar, beat eggs, and compared her receipt books; whilst Sally Bodermacher, formerly a professed cook in gentlemen's families, and who was employed both there and at the Warren on busy occasions, attacked pigeons and poultry, many of which, by the way, had been sent as contributions from the Gibsons, and not only threw herself into the work of making ready, but forced all the servants to follow her example.

The younger lads, trooping over the meadows towards Bronsborough, gathered sheaves of cowslips and bluebells for Mr. Hervey and his staff of senior boys, it being determined to honour the little church to the utmost, and Mr. Hervey intended with simple but pretty floral designs to impart to it a

joyous appearance. One cause of this was that the boys and the usher knew that the people of Bronsborough grumbled at the Bishop choosing Saltmarsh instead of staying with them, forgetting that it was through Dr. Winterburn's invitation that he came at all, and that he might naturally wish to see a place so greatly noted in ecclesiastical history ; thus the school resolved that not only the Bishop but the townspeople should appreciate Saltmarsh. Although it is somewhat anticipating, we may add that the decorations were more successful perhaps because simply of meadow flowers, and made Dr. Winterburn, when taken in to see them, rub his hands with surprised delight.

Carlos and James were likewise very active, for they undertook to wash the church windows, which could easily be done, as these were low. Whilst the two comrades were thus employed, face to face, with the glass between them, Carlos observed an anxious and unusual expression in his friend's face, but as it was impossible, thus divided, to commence a private conversation, he reserved his questions till afterwards. He was, however, prevented from satisfying himself until night, when now having the good fortune of sharing one bed-room between them, he was able to

demand what was the matter from James, who still appeared troubled, and tossed about in his bed.

"I am bothered," was the reply.

"You are worrying yourself about your father turning so strange of late," answered Carlos, involuntarily.

"No, it does not concern home, and it is a paltry affair to rack one so. But I will out with it! You remember that Sunday afternoon, a long while ago, when I was asked to stay with the Baxters, soon after Mr. Hervey was come, and when Dr. Winterburn stumbled and fumbled so over his sermon."

James referred to a memorable school incident.

"To be sure I do," said Carlos; "he never found out that there were only rims to his spectacles until he began the service. It is very queer how the glasses should have dropped out as he went along."

"Not it," returned James, sitting up in his bed and speaking rapidly. "It was Tanner's and my doing. Tanner, you know what a bully he was, called me a Doctor's favourite, and a sneak, who would not, to save my life, do anything to offend him. I told him I no more cared for the Doctor's anger than he did, which I grant was a lie. 'Then,' said he, 'take the glasses out of his spectacles.' It

was just before service, and we were ready to start. Dr. Winterburn's coat was hanging in the hall ; I put in my hand, took out the spectacles, and managed more easily than I had expected to remove the glasses, which I left in his pocket ; and the Doctor afterwards finding them there imagined it to be an entire accident."

"How could you do such a thing? how could you keep it so long to yourself?" asked Carlos, really shocked.

"I did it on the spur of the moment, and learnt afterwards to hate the remembrance of it ; it was a sickener to me ; it rankled in my mind ; finally I went to Bronsborough, and, taking all my money out of the Savings Bank, sent the Doctor, anonymously, the handsomest copy of Shakspeare that I could buy. Tanner had left school at Christmas ; I wrote and told him what I had done. I prayed for forgiveness, and from that time, with a clear conscience, buried the affair in my own mind. Last Good Friday morning, when Dr. Winterburn preached from the text, 'And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,' I somehow prayed that if I had sinned the Saviour would likewise look upon me. Since then, whether it is an answer to this prayer, or

whether it is the devil badgering me—for I am sure I repented enough—this old affair has come back again.”

James wished hard to persuade himself that it was the evil one, though a voice within him, silvery and clear as a little bell, would make itself heard; but half afraid of being either what he should call “a milksop,” or “a Methodist,” he continued,

“I almost wish you were a different boy. I feel uncomfortable about it with you, for when we are with Ponsonby—and he is a good fellow—I can laugh off my care.”

Carlos hardly noticed these last words; like a wise physician, he was intent on finding a “remedy for his patient.”

“There is nothing for you,” said he, coming to a decision, “but to make a clean breast of it to Dr. Winterburn.”

“What, be disgraced!” he exclaimed. “No, not for my mother’s sake! We must think of others besides ourselves,” returned the culprit, glad to clutch a fair excuse.

“Never fear! those would not be the consequences! But I took you to be really sorry.”

“Have I not shown it,” replied James, quite testily. “Your idea sets my very teeth on edge.”

"You are a coward ! Write a note to Dr. Winterburn, and I will put it on his desk before prayers."

And, "just for peace and quietness sake," James consented to do so the first thing in the morning. Nor did he break his word. He wrote, though feeling, he said, "very queer—both hot and cold,"

"Dear Sir,

You will be sorry to learn that it was I, who, purposely, took the glasses out of your spectacles, that Sunday. It has often grieved me since.

I remain,

Your obedient pupil,

JAMES GIBSON."

He resolutely folded the sheet of paper, put it in an envelope, and handed it to Carlos, who fled downstairs with it, that there might be no retraction. Blessings on that good young spirit !

I will not dwell minutely on the conflict which still continued in James's mind. It is enough that it was known elsewhere, and that the results of those moments were burnt into his inmost being. Supposing James lived to a hundred, they would still be found an indestructible portion of his character.

He heard the bell ring for prayers, descended and knelt in his accustomed place, unconscious of aught but that Dr. Winterburn had removed the letter from his desk. He wondered when his master prayed, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," whether he remembered him.

James had wrought himself into a feverish state much more in accordance with the impetuous temperament of his friend than his own. He expected to be publicly disgraced as soon as prayers were over. Then, when Dr. Winterburn walked away without saying anything, he anticipated a summons to his presence, which seemed more awful still. During the morning, never did the door open without a shiver running through him. Yet he wanted the affair over before dinner, because he shared with Carlos the duty of waiting at table, and dreadful was the thought of standing holding the plates by Dr. Winterburn's side, with the consciousness of this affair between them. About eleven Ray came in and told James the Doctor wished to speak with him.

He rose, took at a glance a rapid farewell of the dear old school-room, thinking, dismally, that he

should never study there again, and went on his way, as if to execution. Still, offering up an earnest sigh, rather than prayer for help, to his amazement he turned with unhesitating coolness the door-handle, and entered the parlour to meet his doom.

None of these proceedings had been lost on Carlos, his whole soul had been feeling with his friend. The regular routine was not maintained this morning; some of the boys were busy with the decorations, he could therefore slip away from school duties, took his stand near the parlour, and anxiously awaited the return of his double.

In ten minutes James reappeared. Carlos could read in his countenance that it was well with him; they rushed into the playground; there the happy, sin-released boy told "how his master had risen to meet him, and, to his utter astonishment, seemed anything but fierce. He had asked him a few questions, and he had replied, telling him exactly how he had done it, but screening Tanner; he would not be mean. After that, Dr. Winterburn said 'he saw that it had been a deep affair of conscience, he wished James had been candid from the first;' afterwards, going to his book-shelves, he took down the

first volume of the Shakspeare—"I shall get you to write my name in this book," said he, "which I shall doubly value as coming from my friend James." He obeyed; then, wondering in his bewilderment what he should do next, the Doctor made him add that he had given it to him, after which he said "that was quite enough, he did not wish him to insert more." Only think of that, my dog, only think of that, my cat!" cried James, hardly knowing what he did in his joy, and giving Carlo's hand a frantic twirl.

"He is a brick!" said the latter.

"I can never do enough for him," exclaimed James. "I did not know that such kind people existed. Why, the old chap was not a bit fierce. If it had not been for you, dear old stupid, I should still have gone dragging on my secret. Though I would not confess it to myself, it has already spoiled many an hour's pleasure. Suppose we tell the boys, that they may know the worth of Winterburn."

"No," replied Carlos; "it will be the wisest to let the matter drop."

"Well then, good-bye to bad practical jokes! I feel so braced up, Indigo, just as if I could never be afraid of anything again."

"I am sure we are months older than we were yesterday," rejoined Carlos.

When Tuesday came the sun shone forth as if he expressly wished the place to look its best. The sea was emerald green, the sands golden, the sky clear ; earth, air, and water seemed in league with the boys to set the place off to advantage. And the visitors, who arrived in every kind of vehicle, were quite amazed at not finding Saltmarsh a dismal, melancholy place.

The ceremony went off beautifully. Ponsonby played the organ ; he came of a musical stock, and could have played before Handel ; although it was well that he began early, for the notes drowned the sound of the bell which James and Carlos were ringing. No one, therefore, knew the mishap which befell ; how the old rope broke and James had to rush to the house for the best substitute that he could procure. He was running back with a sheet, when he saw the carriage approaching with the Bishop.

Everyone in the little church felt strangely moved when the baptismal vow, ratified by some fifty youthful voices, together with Sally Bodermacher's, who had negotiated to be confirmed with Miss

Sybilla, burst forth in one spontaneous "I do," which, echoing through the church, floated upwards to the very throne of God in heaven. If these words still live in human ears, how present must they be to those of the Eternal One.

It was fortunate that James and Carlos were just in the centre of the file of Saltmarsh boys when it moved up, though, by some mistake, some other catechumens were already kneeling at the railings, for Mr. Jarvis, one of the Bronsborough curates, seeing this, stretched out his arm and divided the Saltmarsh boys as they were advancing. He did so the moment that James and Carlos had passed; had he chanced to have done it a second earlier the friends must have been separated, which might have occurred, as he was an entire stranger. This caused our boys to kneel the last in the row, and the Bishop, laying his hands successively on each young head, allowed them to rest on theirs whilst he pronounced the beautiful, impressive words, entreating the protection of the Lord over all these His children. Mr. Hervey motioned to Carlos to rise, and, heading the army of young soldiers, he returned to his place.

This was very remarkable, for on the previous

day they had said to each other that they wished it were possible that the Great Bishop of all might lay His hands on their heads.

When service was over the company adjourned to the house. It was composed of the parish boys in their fustian, and with hair cropped fresh for the occasion ; the parish girls in thin blue dresses ; Mrs. Waltham's fifteen young ladies, in soft flowing white garments, like a flock of doves, besides various parents and friends.

The Bishop, with these guests, sat down to the plain but substantial repast prepared by Miss Sybilla, who looked really handsome. So James and Carlos thought, and that it was her father's hospitality which made her thus charming. Mr. Hervey, who helped her to carve, seemed to them equally happy, whilst the Bishop's countenance beamed with pleasure.

James troubled himself a little by fancying that his mother's countenance was still pale and dejected ; but it brightened when it was turned upon him. He had never known till of late how dear his mother was to him. It was a pleasure both to him and Carlos to see that the Bishop shook hands with her when he left, after the repast, for they both knew

how gratifying this would be to her. Mr. Gibson also was present, in a new suit and doeskin gloves, looking very genial and good-tempered towards every one. His wife wore a handsome Canton crape shawl, his present to her from London.

There was a second service, in which James found it next to impossible to keep his thoughts from wandering, owing to the following circumstance:—He was informed by his father that he should spend his midsummer holidays in the north of Ireland, amongst his mother's relatives. This was great good news, and James asked if his mother were going too? His father said no. Would it be possible for Carlos to accompany him? He had, he confessed, often talked to Carlos about their going there together. Carlos was a good fellow, and would have nowhere to go during the holidays if he were away from the Warren. Mr. Gibson was in a very good humour, as I said and as James perceived, nevertheless he gave a very decided negative to his request. For what had Carlos to do with Ireland or the Blayneys, or they with him?

Such was the circumstance that engrossed his mind during the afternoon service.

When this news was communicated to Carlos, he

expressed such genuine delight and sympathy in his friend's pleasant prospects, that he felt less than ever reconciled to his having no participation in them. It was ten weeks, however, to the midsummer holidays, and many things might happen during that time. And assuredly it seemed to James that the strangest thing happened that was possible, no other than that Reynold should advocate Carlos accompanying him, and when some impediment still intervened, should generously volunteer to bear himself the expense of his so doing.

A warm-hearted reminder of the invitation came from the Blayneys, as midsummer approached, to Mrs. Gibson, her son James, and the orphan Carlos Lechêne. Mrs. Gibson again declined, and the Irish castle in the air, which began now to assume very substantial proportions, was given up entirely to the two happy schoolfellows.

Midsummer came, as all midsummers are sure to come. But with the new experiences of our friends we will begin a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISIT TO IRELAND.

By the permission of our readers, we are now at Kinean, in the company of our young travellers.

It was noon when the car, having driven through an extensive field, dotted over with gigantic ilexes and aged elms, in which hundreds of rooks had their quarters, stopped at the front door of the dwelling. It was a large square mansion, of considerable dimensions, which a former owner had wholly refronted in an ugly artificial style, surmounting it with battlements to give it a castellated appearance.

In accordance with what they had read of Irish habits, the two youths expected that the door would be opened by a bare-footed, wild-haired attendant ; on the contrary, a very tidy servant made her appearance, and ushered them into a large and somewhat handsome apartment which was unoccupied.

“ Why, this is not a bit like Ireland,” exclaimed James, when the door was closed upon them, “ nor

indeed have we seen a roofless cabin, with the pig lying across the threshold, in the whole of our drive from the railway station. This is a regular sell! We've got into the Isle of Man instead of Ireland!"

A young girl of about fifteen, sweet and gentle-looking, now entered the room, and quietly bade them welcome. Her manners were undemonstrative; she was as calm as an English girl. Here again the Irish characteristic seemed wanting. She recognised James as her cousin, though she had not before seen him, and bade him welcome to Ireland: regretted that her Aunt Theresa was not able immediately to receive them, as, owing to long indisposition, she now never left her room; also that her father, owing to a pressure of business, had not been able to meet them at the railroad station. She was sure that they must need refreshment after their journey, but dinner would shortly be ready; in the meantime they should be shown to their room.

On returning to the apartment, after adjusting their somewhat disordered attire in a comfortable two-bedded chamber, they found this young lady, otherwise Miss Blayney, still alone. She seemed already to have reached the end of her conversational powers, and left it to the strangers, who, it

must be confessed, felt rather nervous, to carry on the discourse. But at that moment a diversion occurred.

"Sure, Larky, honey, I've been to Mrs. Mawhinny's, and had strawberries, and seen the baby."

The speaker of these words, who had dashed into the room, was a tall girl of fourteen, who would have been plain but for her bright dark eyes. At sight of the strangers, she came to a dead halt; however, losing none of her self-possession, the next moment gave a little nod of recognition, then held out her hands to each of them, and continued in the most charming brogue imaginable,—

"Well, what sort of a passage had you last night? I went down to the shore this morning, and the sea seemed to have an extra supply in it. So I suppose there was a swell. I might have gone to England before now, but I didn't like the water."

Neither of the youths seeming to have her flow of speech, an awkward pause ensued, when the elder Miss Blayney, as if to relieve their dilemma, addressed her sister with the question—

"And how was Mrs. Mawhinny?"

"Now, dear, how can I tell you? I asked her

how she did, but with me that means good morning. But what is the good of standing talking here when it is past three o'clock?" she said. "I must go and rout up Dan, he's so very slow, and these travellers must be famished."

Away went the youngest, Miss Blayney, and immediately a huge bell was heard to clang loudly outside. Then again putting her head in, she exclaimed—

"I have rung you in, you had better be seated, and Dan is to bring in the dinner as soon as ever it is ready."

During the dinner, at which they were joined by Adrian Blayney, a lad of twelve, Maria, as the younger sister was called, carried on the conversation in a very spirited manner.

"Ah, Maria, what will our visitors think of you!" said her sister, reproachfully, as they ascended to their aunt's room together after dinner.

"Why, darling, I knew you were nervous, so I just broke the ice. If I have wetted my foot in doing it, it was all out of pure kindness. Now for Aunt Theresa, to hear all about them."

Miss Theresa Blayney, a kind-hearted, genial woman of fifty, had been for years confined to her

room by a paralytic stroke, but this by no means prevented her playing a very important part in the family affairs. Her apartment, a large airy room over the hall, containing a small sofa-bedstead for herself, but otherwise a regular and very pleasant sitting-room, was the usual place of resort for the whole family, excepting on state occasions, when strangers were with them, though as soon as they ceased to be such, which was speedily the case with our heroes, they also were escorted to the centre of attraction.

Seated around Aunt Theresa's armchair this afternoon, it was not long before that lively lady engaged the young Blayneys and their visitors in some of those games of which she was so especially fond. If indeed she had a mania for anything, it was amusing pastimes. She never found herself in the midst of a number of young people without starting rhyming verses, shouting proverbs, or something of the kind. As for her riddles, they were endless, and classified into orders, agricultural, domestic, literary, historical, mathematical, &c., nor could you please her better than by furnishing her with fresh importations, or by joining her in putting up thirteen horses in twelve stalls, or in some puzzle with the

mysterious number nine. In such a cheerful atmosphere James and Carlos and their new acquaintance speedily found themselves on the best of terms.

We will now remark that Mr. Blayne, who returned in the evening from business, was a man somewhat above fifty, kind in his family and much beloved by them, whilst, had his character been asked in Connbaccagh, so universally was he esteemed there, that it would seem as if words could scarcely express his good qualities. At Kinean, his youngest daughter was his constant companion ; out of doors she might always be seen hanging on his arm, and if anything had to be done about felling trees in the wilderness, an extent of land of some acres, which lay between the back of the house and the sea, or about John Magrath, who rented the kitchen-garden and sold vegetables, it was Mr. Blayne and his young counsellor Maria who did it.

Lark, as she was called, but whose Christian name was Wilhelmina, was her Aunt Theresa's hand-maiden and ally, and her passion just at this moment was botany.

The most prominent feature, at this time, as regarded Adrian, was a walking-stick given him by his father ; it had inspired him with a prodigious

desire for pedestrian achievement, in which he asked his sisters to take part.

"Girls," said he, "could do any amount of tramping if they only chose, and Larky in this way could add prodigiously to her botanical specimens."

If Mr. Blayney and Miss Theresa had not in honour of James and Carlos arranged a little dance, and invited the young Mawhinnys, the Aitkins, the McVeaghs, and a host more, Adrian would not have been satisfied with anything less than the whole five setting off to the West of Ireland for wild Connemara.

The dance made everyone busy. The laundry, a disused room, with a dismembered mangle, was to be the ball-room, and James and Carlos, with the girls, spent one or two mornings in the wilderness, making garlands and festoons, in which the visitors were adepts from their practice under Mr. Hervey; and for this, the beautiful evergreens which grow so luxuriantly in Ireland, and the elegant ivy of that country, furnished them with rich material.

On the day before the dance, the morning being showery, they carried their sprays and leaves into a shed, where, seated in Magrath's market cart, they defied the weather.

Adrian was with them, and stories were told and songs sung, the youths and Maria seeming to outdo each other in the fund of amusement which they possessed ; whilst James, who was determined that his friend should appear to advantage amongst his relations, constantly drew him out, and induced him to tell all those stories which were formerly such favourites in the school. And, infected by the general high spirits, most wonderful were the accounts he gave, not only of life in South American cities, but of scenes and adventures in the forests amongst monkeys, jaguars, and snakes ; whilst so captivated did he appear by the terrific animal features of his native land, that after one of his most astounding narratives he exclaimed—

“ What a dull, commonplace country this is of yours, where there are neither toads nor snakes ! ”

Upon which a regular Irish battery was opened upon him, accompanied by terrific hisses to prove that there were snakes in the land, and much disapprobation. Carlos, however, in reality, lost none of his popularity by this libel on Ireland.

A few minutes afterwards their work came to a standstill.

"We want some more arbutus," said James. "I say, Will, fetch us some, there's a good lad."

The boy thus addressed was just then passing with a basket of lobsters for the house. He promised to obey, but the others knowing young Will Magrath's unreliability, commissioned James to accompany him to see the work done, and the latter, who by this time was quite at home at Kinean, was quite ready for the service.

"Do you think I could ever learn to talk Irish, Will?" he asked, when the lad had mounted into a tree in the wilderness, and was busy cutting down beautiful branches.

"Sure you could," replied Will, pausing in his work, "if you had a geography book,—and I say, your honour," added he, in a low, coaxing tone, "maybe you would save me a lobster's claw after the party, for it is a sweet morsel! Bridget never thinks of me; it was different with Annie Murphy, she was a grand little servant."

"To be sure she was," joined in Magrath the father, one of whose characteristics was to be always turning up, for he did odd jobs about the place when not at work in his garden, whilst his boy Will was employed indoors. "Poor body," con-

tinued the elder Magrath, speaking of the late servant, Annie Murphy, "she has had a deal of trouble about the goats and Johnny Brady."

"How is that?" demanded James.

"Why, it is the nicest, longest story that was ever heard," replied the elder Magrath. "Johnny Brady worked for Mr. Tempest; there are some that don't like Mr. Tempest; I do. He is a nice, plain man, and though I have a weak understanding, I take in what he means. He is as much mixed up in the goats as if they were his, and——"

"You must tell me the rest another time," exclaimed James, interrupting him, a sufficient quantity of arbutus being now cut, and he anxious to return. "I will come to your cottage some day."

"Ay, do!" said Magrath, taking up his spade, "and come round by the bean-plot, it will please your honour much. My wife is a good woman, and will make you welcome. She is Scotch, and has brought up the children to mind the Sabbath, and be clean and tidy."

The gardener was a famous hand at spinning a long yarn.

"What a time you have been!" called out Maria, who was now alone in the shed with her sister, as

James drew near, with Will Magrath bearing the luxuriant evergreen load. "We thought you were never coming. Adrian is tired out, and has carried off Carlos to have a dip."

"I think I will have a swim this afternoon," said Larky.

"Don't you swim as well as your sister?" asked James of Maria.

"No, I don't," returned the latter; "the sea is either too lumpy or too smooth for me, and if I want to have a dance, Larky is lying on her back gazing into the sky."

"Because it is so delicious," interrupted her sister; "it is so soothing, so dreamy, as if one could be lulled into eternity."

"What's the good of that?" said the unsentimental Maria. "Now we'll have our wreaths made. You, James, make one for Larky; she makes mine, I make Carry Mawhinny's."

"Who is she?" inquired Gibson, who eagerly fell into her proposal of making the wreath for Larky.

"Why, my godmother, Mrs. Mawhinny's daughter. I am called Maria for her."

"The English would say *after*, not *for*," remarked Larky.

"I am Irish, and we speak as well as they do," replied the incorrigible Maria. "Carry, Larky, and I shall wear white. We always have two white muslins at a time, the one to wash the other. And she is to stay all night, though the Mawhinnys live in Connbaccagh ; but Mrs. Mawhinny is a delicate woman, and it would disturb her. How many shall we have to stay, Larky ?"

"Thirty or more, and we are to send the car into town this afternoon for the McVeaghs," said her sister.

"Not a bit of it," exclaimed Maria ; "we will all walk into Connbaccagh, show James and Carlos the town, bring back the candlesticks that are wanted with the McVeaghs, and send the car to the station for the services. You waive your bathing for once, Larky."

"It's twenty minutes of one, now," returned Miss Blayne, "and would we have time ?"

"Don't be afraid ; we'll be in Connbaccagh in no time," said Maria.

Her sister thought it a wise arrangement, especially as the candlesticks were wanted, and the decorations all finished, with the exception of putting up, and the McVeaghs and the Jervises

would be useful in helping them to do this in the evening. However, before it could be decided, it was requisite to ask Aunt Theresa's opinion.

Miss Blayne settled the matter directly by her entire approval. The boys should be treated for once to a regular Irish dinner of potatoes and buttermilk, by which means they and her nephew and nieces could start without delay.

The meal was partaken of with a good deal of merriment, and Maria voted that if they were hungry they should buy some "baps," three-cornered little loaves, in Connbaccagh, and thus give James and Carlos as Irish a dose as possible. They were always complaining that there was no brogue, no repartee, no pigs, no Paddies in blue-tail coats, and that they should go back having seen nothing. The English generally were glad to find such a state of things, so was her father, though he was a born Irishman; but she was not, she declared. Maria, however, often expressed an opinion one hour and veered round to the very opposite the next.

The road to Connbaccagh, although a well-frequented highway, was shaded by trees, and was extremely pleasant. The party had not proceeded far before they were overtaken by a very little gen-

tleman, with a fresh, rosy complexion, whom Larky introduced to their guests as their neighbour, Mr. Tempest.

He shook hands with the youths, and then turning abruptly to Miss Blayney, began a vehement tirade against old Daniel Murphy and his refusal to give the goats, as he had promised, to Johnny Dee, with his daughter Annie. The wedding was now at a standstill, he said, for Dee was determined to keep his future father-in-law to the agreement, and there was therefore a dreadful feud between them. They had come to him to settle the dispute, and he had told them they were goats themselves not to agree. Nevertheless, a parent must be respected ; so Johnny, who was often employed by himself, should, he was determined, give up the goats.

“That is not right,” exclaimed Maria, warmly. “Annie is a bonny wee thing, and it is a shame for her not to have the goats she has tended herself. Besides, what a good daughter she has been ! You ought to stand by her, Mr. Tempest ! and she the best scholar in the school.”

“I doubt whether there is much advantage in all this schooling,” returned Mr. Tempest, with a shake of his head. “When I told Johnny he must give

up the goats, and that Annie was a fortune in herself, he replied 'he knew it, for she spoke so beautiful he could not understand the half of what she said.' "

"Mr. Tempest," remarked Larky, smiling, "will you now pass the matter over into Aunt Theresa's hands? She always satisfies people; only you must promise not to interfere, but let her do her work in her own way."

"By all means, young lady," said he. "I will leave it with your Aunt Theresa."

"Come and see us to-morrow evening; my father would be very glad to see you, and we are having some friends." It was Maria who now spoke.

"That is not in my line, I thank you," replied Mr. Tempest. "I am now off on very important business—good morning to you all!"

"That is always his excuse," said Larky, when he had left them. "'Though he is our nearest neighbour," explained she to the youths, "he will have very little to do with us. He owns most of this township, and the poor find him as shut up as we do. But never mind him, poor man!" added she, and then quiet fun beaming from her eyes, and an expression of merriment suffusing her whole coun-

tenance, she continued, "I have such a capital scheme about the goats if I can obtain Aunt Theresa's help !"

"I hope, James, you now understand why we call Wilhelmina Larky," said Maria: "she has lots of spree in her ; she is at the bottom of all the fun that goes forward, only she takes strangers in by her primness. So do I, in another way ; I'm slap-dash, all on the surface, but nothing further."

"But this affair of old Murphy is a very grave business, I can assure you," continued Larky ; "you will find that Auntie and I shall be as grave as Lord Chancellors."

Thus pleasantly chatting together the five reached Connbaccagh, as it seemed to them, in an amazingly short space of time, and transacted their business there most satisfactorily.

The dance of the following evening was a first-rate affair, because everyone threw their whole heart and soul into it. Nearly everybody stayed all night, and some for a day or two afterwards. It had occurred to James and Carlos as a remarkable thing where sleeping-room was found for all, more especially as Mr. Blayne had at the last moment bethought himself of two or three families living about twenty miles off, who were telegraphed for, and who arrived

in time for the fun. Mrs. Mawhinny and her daughter Carry, who was, by the bye, a very nice girl, and whom Maria, to use her own expression, was inclined to *matronize*, had very strenuously insisted on some of the guests being accommodated at her house, but the Blayneys were deaf to all such entreaties. Kinean, they said, would hold twice as many if it were needed. At length Adrian, on the evening of the dance, solved the mystery by conducting them into a large attic, lighted by a skylight, and containing two hammocks, in which Mr. Blayney and his son took up their quarters.

"It is just because you're Blayneys yourselves that I show you," said Adrian, "for where's the good of telling one's visitors about such things? Besides, they all make the same sort of shifts for themselves, and one would anytime rather give one's bed to a friend than sleep in it oneself, and so would you!"

James and Carlos entreated that they might be allowed to give up their room, declaring that they too, as Blayneys, were ready to sleep anywhere.

But Adrian was indignant at the idea. His family, he said, knew how to calculate for the comfort and accommodation of every one. There was

abundance of room, especially as his sisters had dropped into a nook of their own over "the back-returns." This last mysterious place being, as the others knew, the kitchen.

During the merry-making, the McVeaghs, the Jervises, and a number more pressed the visitors from England warmly to go and stay with them. Some of these hospitable invitations were accepted, for as they were assured everywhere of such a cordial welcome, they began to think, with no little pleasure, of spending the whole of the holidays amongst these lively and warm-hearted people.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOME PERFORMANCE.

IN ten days after the dance the household had returned to its usual routine. One morning, therefore, about this time, Larky entered the common sitting-room downstairs, saying that she now had to summon every one to an open council in Aunt Theresa's room.

Maria, who had just been with Carlos to Mrs. Magrath's, where they had been regaled with flat oat cakes or "horse-corn cakes," as she called it, said that she was now going to look after Johnny Dee, who had to whitewash the scullery. Hearing, however, that what was under consultation could not be decided without her, she consoled herself by the reflection that Johnny was a "smart youth" at whitewashing, and might be safely left to himself.

"And now," began Aunt Theresa, when she saw the whole happy group assembled round her, "it's about this misunderstanding between Murphy and Dee that we must think."

"The very subject I was going to broach to Johnny," said Maria ; "it seemed to me that you'd all clean forgotten it."

"Not we, indeed, and here's the proof," replied Aunt Theresa, producing a roll of manuscript. "Larky thought that the best thing to be done would be instead of lecturing, to give them an evening's entertainment. I thought so too, and have therefore written a little piece for you to act to them."

"Still we've not been personal," remarked Larky. "The moment Mr. Tempest spoke, the idea came into my mind what to do."

"Well, let's have the play," ejaculated Maria, "then we shall know what we are to do, and whom we are to invite. We will in any case have the Magraths, and Kiff the brazier, and Mary Burke, our dressmaker, for certain ! And wont they have a good tea, with their bread buttered generously."

The play was simple enough ; but with plenty of scope for Irish humour and repartee. The subject was this : Harry O'Grady, a fine country lad, who lived with his old father and mother, was known to have acted foolishly only once in his life, and that was, when he would not better himself in England,

though he had the chance, because "Faith, he would not leave the old hoe behind!" The one hoe, the hoe used by both father and son. His parents entreated him to go—his neighbours advised him—but all in vain, for unfortunately the father wont part with the hoe, and the son will not go and leave the hoe behind him! Both father and son are equally determined; neither one nor the other will make this great sacrifice. They loved each other dearly, but they loved the hoe better still. All the neighbours came to look at the tool, but it was just like any other such—neither better nor worse than any other veteran hoe which had seen much service. One peace-making neighbour recommends that the father, old Samuel O'Grady, should lend his son the hoe for a year. Another suggests the son to buy himself one in England, if there happened to be such articles there. A third that the bone of contention should be sold, and the money shared between them: it was a pity people did not do so with all bones of contention instead of quarrelling about the pickings; upon which a fourth person proposes that the hoe itself should be divided, and the one take the wood and the other the iron, and so make an end of the matter;

anything for peace ; for the hoe had heaped up discord, and peace had flown straight away through the chimney of old O'Grady's cabin. O what a pity it was that the hoe was not a live creature to speak for itself ! laments every one. At last old Katie, the mother, decides the difficult question.

"Let Harry take the dirty hoe," she says, "for he has no other mortal thing to care for and to comfort him when he's over the sea ; whilst his old father, bless him ! has got me ; has got more than a dozen hoes in a wife ; and we'll just eat the potatoes before they're put into the ground, and that 'll make the matter easy !"

At this, father and son are so touched that each insists on the other having the hoe, and an amicable quarrel ensues in which every one laughs and cries with joy, and the last scene represents Harry O'Grady *with the hoe*, who is accompanied by his old parents and all his neighbours in triumph to the ship just as it is ready to sail for England.

The play was unanimously applauded. Miss Blayney had written a conventional Irish story, with plenty of brogue in it, and hereupon ensued the first of a series of lessons from Maria to James and Carlos : "Och, sure, entirely," &c. It was

decided that Carlos should take the part of Harry O'Grady, and if he made a very ridiculous Irishman all the better, for that would only add to the amusement. Adrian was to be the father. James and Carry Mawhinny and one or two others the neighbours, and Larky the mother. Aunt Theresa begged that all rehearsals might take place in her room.

Every one rejoiced in this; "For you know, dear aunt," said Larky, "that not only we, but the stage will be benefited, for the stage will not bear much trampling on."

"Where shall you have the performance?" asked James.

"O, where we always give our plays and charades," replied Maria, "in the laundry; our stage is constructed of boards, laid on empty tea-chests. It is not bad I assure you, only you must be discreet in your action; and we are able to seat numbers of spectators on the mangle at the end, it does capitally for a raised seat."

"But you must have some scenery to make it effective; let me therefore paint you this," said Carlos, enthusiastically. "I can be of great use to you here. I will paint you a piece of boggy land,

geese in the background, a regular Irish cabin, a pig and all, in front."

"To be sure, to be sure," exclaimed the Blayneys, "only let the Irish be able to recognise it for their own country."

Every one threw themselves heart and soul into the scheme. James and Adrian turned carpenters, and so well secured the stage, that there was no dread of any misadventure, let the actors be as energetic as they might.

Larky wrote invitations to the poor people, which she took herself to read to them, that they might make no mistakes. A few days after the delivery of the notes Maria brought word that one of them was hanging up, framed and glazed, in one of the cabins.

One afternoon Larky entered Aunt Theresa's room, in her bonnet, where James was seated writing the play-bills.

"I am going," she said, "to Mr. Tempest. I mean to ask him to come."

"Such a sour man as that, my dear," remonstrated the elder lady; "I am afraid you'll be introducing a bad element."

Nevertheless Aunt Theresa permitted her to depart.

In an hour's time Larky re-entered the room, exclaiming in a gleeful tone,

"I've won the day! I have at last overcome Mr. Tempest! At first he declared, in a sulky tone, that he had never in his life witnessed a performance, and that it was against his principles. Said I, 'Would you approve of our acting charades amongst ourselves?' To which he replied, after thinking some time, 'That there was no harm in that.' 'But,' I returned, 'we are to love our neighbours as ourselves, and what amuses and gives us pleasure, we should wish them to partake of. We have asked Gaheen, of the little public-house,' added I, 'and he is going to shut up for the night, so there will be no drinking for one evening at least. Besides,' added I, as a climax, 'as all the township will be with us, we ought not to be without its principal proprietor.' 'Very true, Miss Wilhelmina,' said he; 'what you say is very true. You may depend on my coming!'"

"Then he *will* come," returned Miss Blayney, "for I never knew Mr. Tempest break his word."

Yes, Mr. Tempest and everybody came, and the actors, very greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm of the audience, did their parts splendidly. Mrs.

Magrath, who, like her landlord, had at first some scruples about going, no sooner heard that he was to be present, than every objection vanished, and now it was all that she could do to keep Magrath quiet, his whole body was in such an agitation of delight. Miss Burke, the dressmaker, and "that bonny wee thing" Annie Murphy, whispered together that it was a pity the old father should not keep the goats, and they wished Johnny Dee would look at it so.

Old Daniel Murphy himself gave his opinion aloud every four or five minutes, first he was for the father having the hoe, then for the son, declaring that every neighbour had reason on his side of the argument. Finally, when the piece came to an end, so rapturous was his applause, and so rapturous was that of the whole audience, that Mrs. Flinn, the washerwoman, started up, and begged in everybody's name that they might have it all over again. Gaheen, however, told her to sit down, and asked, as being more reasonable, that Miss Wilhelmina would just repeat a few of her speeches, "for it was getting late, and they had no right to intrude on the gentry." Larky did what was requested from her, and Carlos the little comic

song that came into his part ; after which the audience vacated the mangle and the benches, and adjourned to the kitchen, where by that time Bridget and Will had finished dishing up a regular feast.

Whilst these humble but delighted guests were regaling themselves, Aunt Theresa had summoned the actors to her room. She was eager to know all about the play, and how "Spitzbergen" had comported himself. She was informed that nothing could have been better, and that he was now going to stay supper with them. He had at first been very frosty, but had gradually thawed, and was by this time as merry as any of them. He had said that though he feared "the game," as he termed it, would not produce any successful results, still that if the Miss Blayneys wished to arrange another at Christmas, he would lend them his violin, or even perhaps, as it was a very good instrument, and he should not like to trust it in other hands, he might come himself and play for them as orchestra.

The play having been thus performed to everybody's satisfaction, some little anxiety still remained as to the effect it would produce on the parties at whom it was especially aimed. The young people

were beginning to be rather impatient as one day after another went on and no favourable results were apparent; at length, however, about a week later, as James and the two girls were returning from Connbaccagh, Carlos, Adrian, and the walking sticks being out on a two days' pedestrian tour, they were met by old Daniel Murphy, driving the two goats before him. On he came, passing our little party without a word, as if quite oblivious of their existence. He had not gone far, however, before he ran back, leaving the goats to take care of themselves.

"Och now!" said he, "and I'll tell you. I'm just going to sell the blackguard goats and divide the money. Johnny wanted me to keep them, because he should have Annie, like old O'Grady his wife; but sure I could not do that and have the folks laughing at me because I was like the old fellow with the hoe!"

This was good news; and in the evening Magrath put his head into the kitchen full of it. Everybody attributed the change in Annie Murphy's affairs to the play. Magrath said that "the fable was needed bigly, and would do a power of good to more than Daniel Murphy and Johnny," &c.

There was now no longer any impediment to the wedding, at which the young party at Kinean were to be present. But before this took place a letter from Mrs. Gibson recalled James and Carlos to England. The summons it contained was peremptory ; and, full of astonishment and alarm, the former found himself at home, the latter returning directly to Saltmarsh.

Mrs. Gibson received her son with more than her usual affection, under which he at once perceived that something extraordinary was on her mind. She looked pale and anxious, nevertheless she endeavoured to laugh away his fears. At length, however, she confessed that they were on the point of leaving the Warren, and that in a few days the sale of their household furniture and effects would take place, and James had been suddenly summoned home to accompany her to a temporary home at some distance which had been taken for her, as her strength was not equal to exertions which otherwise might be required from her here. Reynold and his father would remain here till all their affairs were wound up, and then join her preparatory to their again settling down somewhere.

James was alarmed. Had his father then lost

money, that these changes were necessary ? No, on the contrary his mother believed that he was much richer than he had ever been before. This she judged from the free expenditure which she witnessed. But she did not know much ; she was kept very much in the dark. Reynold was his father's counsellor : he had been down much of late, and was indeed in the house at that time. He and his father were still sitting over their wine. But she was glad to prepare him for all these changes. And, of course, he would not again return to Salt-marsh.

All this was strange news to James ; but to the young change and excitement are not disagreeable, and excepting for the sorrowful effect it had upon his mother he was willing to believe it was all right ; and, indeed, if his father were now a rich man, how could it be otherwise. He felt in very good spirits, and told his mother of the pleasant visit in Ireland, and of the fun they had enjoyed there till even her sad heart lost something of its burden.

As Mr. Gibson did not make his appearance, James, after some time, went into the dining-room to him. The wine was still before him, his coun-

tenance looked flushed, and he was talking in an excited manner; Reynold was smoking a cigar, with his legs stretched on another chair. James, very full of his Irish visit, soon began to talk enthusiastically of it, and of the Irish relations, more especially as his father had dropped into silence after the first recognition on his entrance. When this subject was exhausted, as neither his father nor brother seemed disposed to introduce any other, James spoke of the regret he felt at not again going to Saltmarsh, and having to part with his friend Carlos, of whom he spoke in strong terms of admiration and praise. Poor James! he could have no idea that all he was so innocently saying was like fuel to a fire. From some strange cause or other his father became furiously angry, struck the table violently with his fist, and spoke with contempt of Saltmarsh as a school, and of Carlos as "a penniless foundling." James, startled by his violent outbreak, which was so unlike the usual character of his father, attributed it to the effect of wine. Reynold too seemed surprised by it, and swaying backwards and forwards in his chair took the cigar from his mouth and endeavoured to pacify him, but to no purpose; again striking the table with his clenched fist

he vowed that his sons would drive him mad, and ordered James from the room.

Ashamed and confounded by passion so unreasonable James returned to his mother for consolation. She was in her chamber sorting linen in a chest.

"Mother," exclaimed he, his heart full of contending emotion, "what is amiss with my father?"

The poor woman looked up with a pale, tearful face. "He has never been himself since he found those things," she said.

"Hang them!" exclaimed he, "I thought they were at the bottom of it. But, mother, has my father taken to drinking?"

"I am afraid so!" returned she, in a tone of bitter anguish.

"Tell me, mother, what has been done about those things?"

She walked to the door, opened it, looked out, and then again shut it, and returning to her son, she said, "Your father and Reynold tell me nothing; still I have gathered that they are sold; and that they have produced a large amount of money. I think they have been sold in Paris, or somewhere abroad. But they say that I know nothing about business. Perhaps I don't; but this I do know,

that your father has never been himself since those things came into his hands."

"It's a nasty piece of business altogether!" exclaimed James, in the simple boyish indignation of his young heart.

From this time he had the deepest sympathy with his mother. Poor woman, she had a heavy cross to bear!

For several days after James's return from Ireland she was busied in making preparations for the sale, in all which he was her companion and helper. This was assuredly a comfort, still when she saw his subdued countenance, and even experienced his thoughtful conduct towards herself, her heart bled as it were with a new pain, and she could not refrain from tears. This new duty of comforting and supporting his mother was pleasant to him; it was a schooling which called forth his higher nature. Even the parting from Carlos seemed very light in comparison with the duty of being a son indeed to his mother.

Mrs. Gibson and James left the Warren as appointed, but not without, to James's great surprise, his father inviting Carlos to spend the Michaelmas vacation with his friend at Rose Lodge, a pretentious

Italian villa on the outskirts of London, which was henceforth to be their residence. The sale took place at the Warren, and before Michaelmas the family was settled down in considerable splendour at the new home; but before the time arrived for Carlos's visit, the possibility of it was prevented by the declining health of Mrs. Gibson, who was ordered by the physician to a foreign watering-place, whither she was accompanied by James, it now being decided to winter abroad, Reynold and his father intending to join them later in the year.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOOD BIRDS AND BAD BIRDS.

MONTHS passed. Winter came, then spring, and the Gibsons were still abroad. James cheered his friend at home by long, chatty letters. Into what a sterling good fellow young Gibson was growing! He was everything to his mother; as her interpreter he transacted her little commissions, waited upon her, and as she grew weaker and weaker, carried her out in the sunshine, or drove her slowly about in a little pony carriage. He was now seventeen; had wonderfully expanded in body as well as in mind; had become quite a man, and his mother leant upon him as on a trustworthy staff. It was well that Mrs. Gibson and her son thus clung to each other, being thrown entirely together. Mr. Gibson and Reynold being of a convivial character soon made many acquaintance, and except sleeping at home were seldom there.

It was still spring when Mrs. Gibson quietly passed away. A blessed change for her, leaving

James occasion to grieve only for his own loss. Immediately after the funeral Mr. Gibson removed to Baden-Baden. Here, wanting occupation, James obtained permission from his father to remove to Heidelberg, and there attend the University for the completion of his education. He needed this change to divert his mind from his recent sorrow. Here the life was cheerful and congenial, and here he soon became entirely absorbed by his studies.

We are now arrived at a pleasant episode in our friend's life.

One afternoon, at the commencement of the autumn semestre, or college vacation, James was on his way to Baden-Baden, walking through the Black Forest, when, seated outside a Gast-hof, taking some refreshment, he saw advancing along the high road, also towards the Gast-hof, a gentleman in a beaver chimney-pot hat, a young man in black, and a tall youth in a light tourist suit and straw hat.

"English, from top to toe!" thought James, who began to feel quite German. At the next glance a sudden thrill passed through him, for the eldest and youngest reminded him of Dr. Winterburn and Carlos. As they advanced the resem-

blance increased. There was no mistake; his esteemed Dr. Winterburn and his dearly loved Carlos were actually approaching, accompanied by no other than young Ponsonby, who was now wearing mourning for his father.

O the joy of that unexpected meeting; the shaking of hands, the hearty greeting! A lifetime of delight compressed into some seconds!

Nor did it take long to explain what had brought them thither. Mr. Hervey and Miss Sybilla were married, with Dr. Winterburn's entire approval, only the last week. At first Miss Sybilla refused Mr. Hervey, to whom a good living was offered by the Bishop: could she bear the idea of leaving her father solitary? But her father was very positive in Mr. Hervey's favour; the marriage had therefore taken place duly, and in Carlos's opinion it only wanted the presence of his friend to have made it a perfect wedding. Owing to this event, and other alterations which were to take place, the vacation this year was later than usual. It was now the second of the seven weeks' vacation, so that five still remained. These Dr. Winterburn determined to spend with Carlos on the continent, and here therefore they were, accompanied by "that good

fellow " Ponsonby, who, now that his father was dead, was come into a great property. " But it had not spoiled him a bit," said Carlos, " for there never was a better fellow !"

The new group of travellers were on their way to the Tyrol, and now proposed that Gibson should join them. He was delighted with this idea, and could not himself see any impediment in the way. In the first place, however, he must consult his father, and make such little preparations as were necessary for himself. In order to accomplish this his friends were very willing to make a short halt at Baden-Baden, which they would all reach early that evening. Baden-Baden is a charming place, where a few days could be spent very pleasantly ; the reader may therefore imagine how joyously the little party sped thither.

James took his friends home with him to tea, well knowing, from his father's pride of generous hospitality, that they would be heartily welcome. But neither his father nor brother were in ; they were told that they were at the Conversations House, where there was music, and where they generally spent their evenings.

Over the pleasant evening meal Dr. Winterburn

arranged their plans. Here they would remain for three days. In fact that was the original intention, as there the bride and bridegroom, who had been in Belgium, were to join them for a day or two, and they would like to see James. James felt amazed and somewhat flattered by any one caring to see him. Nobody doubted for a moment of Mr. Gibson's consent for him to accompany them, and they were all therefore as happy as possible.

After tea, Dr. Winterburn and Ponsonby becoming absorbed in some English papers, James and Carlos walked out together, and, seated in a quiet nook of the beautiful public grounds of this gay watering place, talked away to their hearts' content, for they were restless and unsatisfied until they had every thought in common. Going deeper and deeper into each other's heart, they came to the portions of James's recent life connected with his mother; then, after dwelling upon her memory, to Carlos's solitary life at Saltmarsh.

"Did you feel outrageously lonely?" asked James.

"Yes, for months and months. But I will tell you what happened to me this spring, and which

did me more good than anything else, for what I tell you is always sacred. I woke one morning, then, with my heart burning within me, for I had dreamed that I was at afternoon service, and that a stranger had preached, but not from the pulpit, but from the lectern, which was placed before the free seats. He was young, somewhat like Mr. Hervey, with an inexpressible essence of goodness about him. After service I had a little commission to execute for Dr. Winterburn in Bronsborough, and but a short time to do it in. Still I could not help turning round now and then to see if the clergyman were not coming, for he wonderfully attracted me. At last, to my delight, I saw him advancing, with an elastic step ; and he seemed so engrossed in his own joyous thoughts that I imagined he would not see me. To my surprise, he said something aloud as he passed, to which I made a reply, imagining that it was intended for me. His next words, however, led me to suppose that I was mistaken, for he said in such a kind, condescending voice, " What, is that you, Carlos ? " He laid his hand gently on my shoulder, then walking along talked to me, and I found myself answering him readily, as if I knew him perfectly well. He asked me what work I was

about, and when I told him he showed that it quite satisfied him. I was very sorry when we reached the short cut to Bronsborough, and I had to leave him. At parting he made me shake hands with him, which seemed to me a wonderful condescension, saying, "I have a great way to go, for I live in a country far from here," and then added, that "he should soon be seeing James." So it was as much intended for you as me. I suppose that it is silly to look for meanings in ordinary dreams, but there was a divine something about this that I could not forget. My soul fed on it as if it were manna."

The youths talked on, never heeding that it was twilight, until James was recalled to present circumstances by the remembrance that his father had not yet been apprized of his arrival, and of the guests whom he had left at home. Returning, therefore, to the more occupied walks, he suddenly came upon his father in the front of the Conversations House, who received him very kindly, welcomed Carlos, and on hearing of the other strangers at once accompanied him home, where he welcomed Dr. Winterburn and Ponsonby most cordially, insisting upon their remaining whilst at Baden under his roof and readily consented to James accompanying them. When

Mr. and Mrs. Hervey arrived he sumptuously entertained them. In fact both he and Reynold were generosity itself. This was a great comfort to James, who had noticed that the good temper both of his father and brother was very uncertain ; it was now, however, at its best, and so far nothing could be better.

On the first day of their expedition Dr. Winterburn and his trio travelled with the bride and bridegroom, who were seeing as much of Germany and Belgium as could be accomplished in a month. Mrs. Hervey looked at Gibson and thought him handsomer than she did at the confirmation feast. Both she and Mr. Hervey were in truth happiness personified.

So in fact seemed the others ; and so they really would have been from the first day to the last had not a cloud towards the end gathered over James, not from the prospect of parting with his friends, but from something much more serious, from a fact which the Doctor had been forced to reveal to him.

Greatly to his dismay this good man had discovered at Baden-Baden that Mr. Gibson and his son were constant frequenters of the gaming-tables for which that place is so fatally celebrated ; indeed,

this was the attraction which had made it alluring to them. James, engrossed by his books, even before went to Heidelberg, and never dreaming of the perilous life they were leading, imagined that they merely occupied themselves at billiards, or by the pleasures of the Conversations House. Dr. Winterburn, however, whose perceptions were more awake, soon penetrated to the sad truth, and before leaving had taken upon himself, as a friend and a Christian minister, to warn them of their danger. He hoped his words might take effect, therefore when James (in despair at this sad disclosure) asked him what course he should pursue, the Doctor encouraged him with the hope which he himself was willing to entertain.

On their return to Baden-Baden, however, it was to make a discovery which destroyed every hope. To their grief and consternation they found that a terrible crisis had occurred in their affairs. For some weeks, indeed ever since they left, a run of ill-luck had set in against them, and growing more desperate as their losses became greater, they were now ruined men.

Dr. Winterburn and "that good fellow Ponsonby," who had indeed grown into a noble-hearted young

man, remained a few days at Baden-Baden, rather out of regard to James than from any other motive, to wind up honourably the Gibsons' affairs, earnestly trusting that the two men once removed from their fatal haunts might become altered characters, more especially as both father and son, now humbled and repentant, seemed truly desirous of entering on a new career. To assist this Dr. Winterburn warmly seconded a plan which they proposed, that of joining a gentleman, an intimate friend of Reynold, in California. This gentleman, they informed him, had just lately urged them to unite with him in a scientific undertaking, which promised to be very lucrative, whilst it had the advantage of requiring but little capital.

They accordingly left Baden-Baden, but scarcely were they gone when a little revelation was made which considerably shook the faith which had been put in their promises. A few papers and books which his brother had left behind were taken possession of by James, and casually turning them over, what was his surprise to discover various letters in the handwriting of M. Neuville, so familiar to him in boyhood from the notes which Carlos had received from him. Hoping to find here something

which might be advantageous to his friend, he looked into them, when what was his still greater chagrin and surprise, to discover that the gentleman in California, Reynold's "intimate friend," was no other than this unprincipled man! Nor was this all; one, bearing date September, five years before, was of a most singular character. It commenced with many invectives against the ill-luck which took Reynold to Saltmarsh on one of the only nights of the low-tides when the sands could be searched. The writer, however, proceeded to say that he would himself proceed in the exploration; that for this purpose he should leave the train two stations down the line on the evening of the day when that letter would come to hand, make his way, according to previous directions, across the country, and conceal himself behind a certain sand-ridge until his friend joined him, which, according to the state of the tide, would be two o'clock in the morning. He desired Reynold to be provided with a dark lantern and the necessary tools. In a postscript he recommended him to leave the house quietly after the family were in bed; but above all things to be cautious lest the unfamiliar premises should betray him or lead to any discovery.

James almost doubted his senses as he read these lines ; the want of principle they implied in him to whom they were addressed, inexpressibly wounded his upright disposition. Compelled to follow up the clue, he continued his painful examination, and came upon another note written some days later, which threw still more light on this distressing subject. After mentioning his fortunate evasion of Dr. Winterburn at the Becclesford Junction, the writer requested Reynold to hasten at once to London to receive his share in their undertaking—what this was, was not indicated—the success of which had been satisfactory, as his partner was anxious to leave at once for North America. In conclusion he desired him to use his utmost endeavour to obtain his father's co-operation in exploring the sands the following spring, as there was no doubt but that considerable treasure would be found there ; but that in any case M. Neuville must remain incognito, and not appear at all in the business. Again a postscript, which said that if Reynold was able to do a kindness at any time for the boy Carlos, he the writer would remember it to his correspondent's advantage. This was a sad explanation to James of his brother's generosity to

his friend. Yet he felt a certain satisfaction in seeing that Reynold was not without a sense of honour.

These painful and humiliating disclosures, so distressing both to James and Carlos, increased rather than otherwise the esteem and friendship entertained for them by Dr. Winterburn and Ponsonby. So that not only good, but evil over-ruled, bound th four together.

James immediately used the liberty he possessed of acquainting Ponsonby with Mr. Gibson's discovery of treasure, which, as Lord of the Manor, he now knew had legally belonged to his late father. On this Ponsonby generously made over to James and Carlos his claim of any property which their connexions had obtained.

We are now at the end of the youthful experiences of our heroes. Thenceforth they had to wing their flight into the wide world ; still, not alone, for good birds flock together, and their faithful congeners, Dr. Winterburn, Ponsonby, and their firm friend Mr. Blayney, never forsook them.

When their University careers were finished James and Carlos gladly relieved Dr. Winterburn of all the burden of school teaching, now weighing

somewhat heavily on his advancing years, and with what success we all know.

During the writing of these pages great have been the doings at Kinean, where Mr. Gibson has actually opened a dance in the laundry with his bride,—no other than our old friend Larky, or rather Miss Blayney, as she has grown into a very graceful young lady, followed by Carlos with his bride—who you may guess is Maria, and a very captivating creature she is, too. And the Magraths and Johnny Dee and his wife, and Miss Burke (now Mrs. Conn), and all our other friends were there, and danced away merrily to the sound of Mr. Tempest's violin, whilst good Aunt Theresa, who is a great deal stronger, and even able to descend from her room, sat looking on, surrounded by a host of little Dees on one side, and with Mrs. Hervey and Walter on the other. Adrian is five foot ten now, and has whiskers ; till you see his good-tempered smile he is hardly to be recognised.

Whilst the school and its belongings are prospering most surely and satisfactorily, Mr. Ponsonby, the good lord of the manor, has commenced a noble undertaking, that of reclaiming the dreary sands, in which the ability of Mr. Tanner is

very useful to him. The ruins which were thus laid dry, proved, unfortunately, to be much less extensive than expected, and the treasure found, from what had been already discovered, a considerable disappointment. They consisted of a few old jewels, which were saved by Mr. Ponsonby for his young wife, and curious relics of no great intrinsic value, though interesting as belonging to the place; these may be seen in the Bronsborough local museum.

With regard to our birds of evil feather I can say but little, excepting that their fate was such as might have been expected. The Californian scheme proved a bubble. Six years ago they were heard of amongst the Mormons, at the Salt Lake, and the last intelligence that we can report was, that they had parted company on the breaking out of the American War. Neuville had joined the ranks] of the South, and Mr. Gibson and his son those of the North, but they all three met again at the engagement which preceded the memorable events of Bull Run, where we must leave them.

THE END.

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